

Teacher Preparation

Jamal knew his students enjoyed sharing in creative ways books they had read. He wanted to select a genre of literature that would combine social studies and literature. Jamal decided historical fiction novels would do just that. Jamal knew his students were studying about the circumstances surrounding the Civil War in North Carolina. He wanted his students to connect with a major character in the novel within its historical context. He knew just what he would do! Jamal reviewed his presentation; gathered his wig, overcoat, and cane, and was ready to go!

Activity Starter

Part One: Jamal began by taking his students to the media center to choose a historical fiction novel set around the time of the Civil War. Students were to read this novel during in-class reading time and for homework. Jamal also chose a historical fiction novel and read with his students.

Part Two: After having completed their novels, Jamal and his students each chose a character to study in depth. They used their social studies textbook and other materials from the media center to discover more about the time period in which their characters lived and the role of their characters in the context of their societies. Soon the students began to understand the historical people who could have been the inspirations for their novels' characters. They also gained a deeper understanding of the time period in which their characters lived.

Part Three: Now for the fun part! Jamal introduced the Book Talk format he wanted each student to follow by modeling an example. Jamal dressed in the role of his character by wearing a wig, adding a cane, throwing on an old dusty overcoat, and topping it off with a pipe. Once in character, Jamal talked about the Civil War from his personal perspective, as it affected his family, his health, and his future. Students were captivated by the power of Jamal's character, and saw history come alive. They were excited about preparing a similar Book Talk for their chosen character.

Part Four: Jamal asked his students to come to class with props and/or dress representing their character and to offer a five-minute presentation on their life and role within the novel and the time period. Afterwards, Jamal had each student write an impromptu essay on his/her character and reflections about his/her life within the novel.